1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
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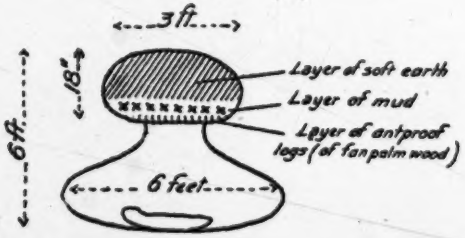
764 The grave is of the decanter-shaped type, as in the following plan :—




One of the grave-diggers enters the grave to receive the body. Another stands at the neck to hand it down. The body is laid to rest in the extended position, a man being laid on his right side facing east, a woman on her left side facing west (which is the usual Hausa mode of interment). As the body is placed in position the relatives give vent to pious utterances such as "May God (Gwaza) receive you, and may God refrain from taking any more of us". A chief is laid on a platform of sticks on which a mat is spread. The neck of the grave is blocked with logs of the trunk of the fan palm (which are ant-proof) and these are plastered over with a layer of mud. The excavated earth is then piled on top, raising a mound above the surface level, in order to prevent the rain washing out the grave. If the deceased had been a man of importance a stone is set up on the top of the grave in order that the site of the grave may be known to descendants who may wish to make offerings to their dead ancestor.

After the interment horns are blown if the deceased had been moderately old; but if young, all further rites are waived. There is no dancing over the grave (as among the pagan tribes of Bornu). Beer is then drunk, the priest of Elenowum saying: "So-and-so has died; may he rest in peace, and may his house increase." A goat may be killed by the senior relatives and shared by the relatives and friends, the priest receiving a major share. If the deceased had been a chief the priest of Elenowum 764 sacrificed the goat himself and shared with those who had helped at the burial, carefully burying the blood in order that none 622 may suspect that the chief had died. The secret of the chief's 177 death was maintained for seven days, and was then disclosed to his immediate relatives (who no doubt were already fully aware

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of the fact) and was publicly announced some three or four weeks later by beating the royal drum and summoning relatives from far and wide, goats being killed, and a feast held. These rites are probably a late importation from other tribes, as the Katab originally never had any chiefs in the present sense of the word.

It was customary in former times that eight days after the death of an old important man a human skull and the skulls of a buffalo, hartebeest, and roan (obtained from the priest of Elenowum) were displayed, one on each hut of the deceased's compound. This is interesting as showing that the skull cult was in some way identified with the cult of the dead, but the Katab are not able to suggest in what way. The skulls would not, they said, be put on the top of a house in which a woman was weaning a child, as that would cause the speedy death of the child. The widow goes into mourning, and, on the conclusion of her mourning, a feast is held, the skulls being returned to the priest of Elenowum.

The real funeral feast, however, must take place in the dry season, as it would be impossible during the rains to assemble relatives who were busy with their farming duties. The funeral feast is, therefore, held after harvest and lasts for two days. It is held not at the graveside, but in an open space in the village. The women of the town in which the old man or woman had died prepare the beer. The senior male relatives go to the *obwai* hut, and after a symposium accompanied by the beating of a double-barrelled pottery vase which emits a hollow deathlike tone they come forth and join in a general dance accompanied by drums, horns, and zithers (imported from the Bauchi Plateau). One of the songs sung at the dance is sung in Hausa, as the Katab say that none of their own songs are so euphousion :—

"Baban dorina, dama rua, wa ka shiga ?
(Mighty hippopotamus, disturber of the waters, who can enter there ?)
Dodon Gwari, giwa da ragama,
(Spook of the Gwari, elephant with a headstall)
Yayan Bakwa, suna hana giwa dawa
(Sons of the Hausa, who drive away the elephant)
Kajin giddarku su je su kwana lafiya
(Chickens of your household may they go and sleep in peace)
Akwian giddarku su je su kwana lafiya
(Goats of your household may they go and sleep in peace)
Yayan giddarku su je su kwana lafiya
(Children of your household may they go and sleep in peace)."

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sent from Kauru for the purpose. The Katab headmen were treated in this way and, when a new headman was appointed, a messenger was sent from the chief of Kauru with the sword wrapped in a mat. The messenger was given numerous presents (a goat, bags of millet, salt, a dish of butter, and 10,000 cowries) and the ceremony of swearing-in was then performed. "Here is the sword," he said; "if you swear that you will do no mischief, and will hide nothing from us you will be established. But if you engage in intrigue this sword will kill you." The headman swore to be faithful for ever, and was then allowed a fleeting glance at the sword, the case being slightly opened. A feast was held, and the messenger returned to Kauru with the sword. The present district headman of the Katab area obtained two of these swords from Kauru and uses them in the same way to-day. He has issued one to each of the heads of the sub-clans, Aswen and Fakan, and these headmen use the swords for swearing in minor officials of the sub-clan. No village headman would feel that he had been properly appointed if he had not been shown the sword.

The sword shown to me was shaped thus, the handle having been injured :—

The length was about two feet. Numerous other chiefs of Nigerian tribes have sacred swords. Some are believed to have been brought from the Yemen by the forefathers of the chief. (But those examined were of Prussian manufacture.)

When the Bornu-Fulani dynasty displaced the Habe of Zaria, Kauru came under the new régime and the Katab continued to function as an appendage of Kauru. (Morwa, however, dealt

2: Gunn E-4 (no date) 1956 FF38 Katab FF38



Women of all sections of the Katab tribe also wear a stud or plug (about half-an-inch in diameter and length) in the upper lip. This is not an uncommon feature in Nigeria, but is not found among immediately adjacent peoples, so far as can be determined, and so effectively sets off members of the Katab Group from their neighbours all around.

As distinctive as the *oyam*, though surprisingly neglected by Meek in his definition of the Katab culture-complex, is the massive head-board or tray on which women of the Katab Group carry their loads: this is of unusual size, often a yard long and half as wide, and ovoid (or an elongated octagon) in shape: it is carved of a light-weight wood, flat, with a low rim, sometimes decorated with incised geometrical (rarely, stylized but realistic animal) figures, and invariably stained with red ochre. Meek notes that among the Katab proper a mother delivers her child on her head-board which "thereafter bears a semi-sacred character." The precise distribution of this article cannot be determined, but it does not appear to be used outside the area now occupied by the Katab Group.[7]

The dress of men of the Katab Group does not seem to be distinctive in any particular detail. The traditional garb appears to have been a skin loin-covering, and elders were distinguished by a skin across the shoulders. To-day, cloth is commonly used in place of skin; Hausa-Fulani caps, particularly the *fula*, and gowns, even the *riga*, may be worn by elders in civil occupations. But the priests maintain traditional styles, and all cloth is cast off at religious observances. There is some evidence that certain members of the Group,[8] if not all, wear the penis-sheath—an item virtually universal among tribes immediately to the east and south, in Plateau Province, though apparently not found in historic times westward in Nigeria.

Tribal marks of the same pattern are worn by Katab proper, Ataka, Ikulu, Kagoro, Kaje, Kamantan, and Moroa: for a man, these consist of 41 vertical scars across the forehead, nine on each cheek, and a fringe of 24 tiny cuts along the edge of the jaw; they are similar for a woman, but number 55, 17, and 26 respectively. In addition women receive intricate markings on chest, abdomen, and back. According to Meek (1931) "boys commonly refuse to be marked" to-day; the position as regards women is not clearly stated, but adult women attending the Kafanchan market in 1949–50 with very few exceptions had the markings described. There is no clear information regarding the markings used, if any, by Jaba, Kachichere, Kagoma, and Kaninkon. Early investigators ascribe the invention of these marks to the Katab proper.

(iv) *Social Organization: Marriage Customs*

Katab practices do not clearly distinguish the members of the Group from certain of their neighbours (especially the peoples of the Kauru hills, the Chawai, Irigwe, Kadara, even—according to D. A. Percival—the Shuwalbe and Buli tribes of Fulani in the area, among others); but the practices outlined below are apparently universal among members of the Group, with the possible exception of Kaninkon, about whom no information is available.

(*a*) *Secondary Marriage Constituting Serial Polyandry:* A virgin goes to live as a wife with a man who has made customary payments and performed farm-labour for her parents. After a period fixed by public opinion as decorous, she may leave her first (primary) husband to live with another man, who has secretly won her favour and secured by payments to her parents rights over children which she may bear him: she is, thus, his wife in every sense, but her primary marriage has not been dissolved, and she may, in due course, return to her primary husband. In theory, she may add indefinitely to the number of her husbands, circulating among them, living with each in turn for as long as she chooses (but never less than the fixed period); in practice, however, the number is usually small, and a woman may

[7] Wooden head-trays are used elsewhere, most notably by near neighbours of the Katab peoples on the High Plateau, but patterns differ radically from the Katab.

[8] Namely, Katab proper, according to Meek in *Northern Tribes*, though he fails to mention the subject in *Tribal Studies*, Moroa, according to Temple, and Kaje, according to Reynolds.

According to Meek, Katab have adopted, apparently purely as a recreation, the *sharo* (*sharau, shado,* etc.) form of initiation ordeal, practised by some of the local Fulani "tribes," among whom, though it is not universally practised, the activity is to all appearances psycho-pathological in character, as it is carried out at the present time. The Katab, however, bind their bodies with cloth as protection against the cane-blows by their fellow-contestants, and *chadong gane*—as it is called in the vernacular—becomes a game of tag.

The taking of heads in war does not appear to have been regarded as a necessary condition to the status of adulthood, though an adult's status was enhanced by success in battle. (See also *Religious Beliefs and Practices,* below.)

*Marriage*

In the case of primary marriage, a girl may be engaged at birth, but normally she is sought in marriage when she is a few years old, through the father's brother or "a male paternal cousin," and "is formally betrothed at the age of seven." Payment and/or service are as follows: (1) four fowls to girl's father; (2) one day's labour, aided by suitor's friends, annually on farm of girl's father (or cash in lieu of service); (3) 2,000 cowries or their equivalent to the girl's father, who keeps the major part for himself and distributes the balance among his male relatives, i.e., brothers and paternal cousins; (4) presumably at the time of the actual wedding, an additional 20,000 cowries to the father (who keeps two-thirds for his use, distributing the balance among his relatives);[35] (5) before the final rites, a goat to the girl's mother, three fowls to the father, and 100 cowries to her maternal grandfather.[36] A date is then set by the girl's father for the wedding, which takes the form of capture, convincingly carried out, according to Meek: friends of the suitor seize the girl and leave her in the hut of a relative of the suitor, where she remains for three nights; on the fourth night, the marriage is consummated in the hut of her mother-in-law, where she lives until given her own hut at the end of the first year.

According to Meek, "many Katab girls" are married before puberty. Primary marriages always take place during the dry season (October-March), except in the rare case of an unseasonable pregnancy, when "the girl would be married off as quickly as possible to her fiancé." Premarital intercourse is said to be unusual because lineages (and clans) are localized.

As regards secondary marriage, a man may not contract a union with a married woman who is (*a*) a member of his own clan, (*b*) a "close" relation of his mother (that is, presumably, a member of his mother's lineage), (*c*) a member of a primary wife's parental household (it is not clear whether affines of his primary wife are included in this prohibition, or her sisters and cousins who have married out of the household), (*d*) the wife of a member of his own kindred, or (*e*) the wife of a fellow-villager. As has already been pointed out, members of Minyam and Agbat clans are enjoined to seek secondary wives among the wives of fellow-clansmen, within the limits indicated here; members of Aku and Shokwa clans, on the contrary, extend the prohibition described at (*d*), above, to the wives of fellow-clansmen, and take their secondary wives from the men of Minyam and Agbat. According to Meek, secondary marriage-payments amount to 15 shillings cash and one goat (1931); when secondary wives are obtained from neighbouring tribes, marriage-payments commonly follow, rather than precede, "elopement."

[35] In the same paragraph Meek stresses inexplicably that "the father's brother . . . receives the bride-price, part of which only he hands on to the parents of the girl."

[36] The cowrie was discontinued as a medium of exchange in 1919, at *c.* 2,400–3,000 = one shilling, in Zaria City. Whether it is, or was at the time of Meek's investigation, still actually used in marriage negotiations is not clear, at least to the complete exclusion of legal tender. Re marriage payments Meek notes, ". . . members of the same sub-clan frequently assist each other in procuring wives. It it is not uncommon for a man to hand over to a friend the bride-price obtained for his daughter or niece in order that the friend may have the means to provide himself with a wife. The money may be treated as a loan, but is often given as a free gift."

3:Temple G-4 (no date)1922 FF38 Katab FF38
Kagoro



The Kagoro are fine warriors and from boyhood upwards practise games of war, throwing stones, taking cover, wrestling, scouting, etc. Before the commencement of a war a general is appointed, and if they have entered into alliance with others the originating tribe takes command. Scouts are used and a reserve is kept, and if they are driven out from a town they smash the hives so that the bees may settle on the invaders.

Boulders are rolled down from the hills, slings and stones, knives, wooden clubs and bows and arrows are all used in warfare. These latter have iron heads with flanges, and the shafts are so notched that each warrior can recognise his own arrow. It is said that they did not know the use of bows and arrows before their migration, and that they only learnt to use arrow-poison from the Attakka at the end of the nineteenth century. Stockades are unknown. Round hide and fibre shields are used for defensive purposes.

When about to enter upon a treaty of peace each party constructs a broom of grass, similar to that used for lighting fires, so that the foe may be exposed if treachery at night is contemplated. The principals then advance to the boundary, each bringing with him a he-goat, the throat of which is cut and the blood smeared on a certain tree or stone, over which three incantations have already been uttered. The heads and skins are set aside for the benefit of the respective high-priests, and the rest of the meat is divided lengthwise, one half of each goat being eaten by the opposing forces, who are seated at some distance from one another. They then separate, each party being accompanied by three hostages, whose persons are regarded as sacred.

The Elders of the tribe selected as Chief one of their royal blood, subject to the British Resident's approval, that is to say since 1905, when the first British expedition marched against them. Prior to the British occupation they had once appealed to the Sarkin Jemaa as an impartial authority to settle a dispute concerning the appointment of their Chief, but with that exception conducted their own affairs through councils of heads of families, who composed the courts and advised the Chief. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century they had no Chief, but at that time the Kaje inflicted a severe defeat upon them and exacted an annual tribute of two slaves. The Elders each gave a child from his family in rotation, until a man named Gundong said that if he were made Chief he would provide the tribute. He then struck a cotton tree, from which a young man and maiden magically issued, and he founded the dynasty of Kagoro Kings. It is related that the tree withered on the day of his death.

However that may be, the Kaje did not long receive their tribute, but every year subjected the defaulters to a slave raid. From this time the Kagoro themselves took to slave-raiding

426 the land. This being so the fact that the borrower is prepared to
572 build a house on the land and be somewhat more than a bird of passage is proof positive of the extent of the friendship and therefore something to be encouraged—a relic of the days when farmlands were plentiful and abundant and every addition to the male strength of the community was much sought after and welcomed.

425 33. Apart from the three transactions described above no other transactions affecting land appear to take place and if they do take place they would not be recognised by customary law. Individual tenure may have become firmly established; but this tenure is not absolute and is subject to definite customary restrictions and limitations.

The Authority in land matters.

622 34. When living in their strongholds in the Kagoro hills, the
621 Kagoro had no single tribal chief. It would be extremely difficult, at this stage, to establish what, if any, the highest single socially cohesive unit might have been—clan, sept, kindred or family group. As pointed out in paragraph 21 above, however, this is of academic interest. Whatever may have been the unit in the past there
648 remains no discernible trace of it now. The district boundaries have
423 been established by the British Administration and so have the village unit boundaries; a District Head and Village Unit Heads
●177 have been acknowledged and appointed and the unit is run as a tribal whole. There is evidence that parallel with the breakdown to individual tenure of the land there has been a definite development, by consent, in the new Tribal Authority's powers as regards land matters—the Tribal Authority in this case being the District Head acting with the advice and consent of his Elders. Whether or not this development is from within or a mere copying of neighbouring Emirate custom is hard to say. It exists and it is of equal interest to the development reported in paragraph 49 of Mr Rowling's Plateau Province Report, *i.e.*, " the recoil on to intensified control ". The following examples are pointers.

423 35. All farmable lands in the Kagoro district are allocated,
311 *i.e.*, are claimed by some person or persons as being lands originally cultivated by their own immediate ancestors and therefore inherited by them. This applies to ' bush ' as well as fallow. In the past, however, swamps and kurumis were considered as being of no use for farming purposes however useful they were as hiding places in
[197] the event of a raid. They remained communal. The introduction of rice and sugar cane cultivation has now altered matters. Swamp land can now be used. It is held that any member of the village unit within which the swamp lies has the right, without seeking permission from anyone, to take up such portions of the swamp as are sufficient for his needs. Any person from outside the village

manuring. Emigration has already started to take place along the southern border of the district into the Keffi Division and along the south-eastern border into Jema'a where the emigrants are loaned land and accepted as welcome additions to the tax lists. It would not appear that any payments in cash or kind have been *so far* demanded from them. What will develop in future is anybody's guess. This question will be returned to at a later stage of the report. 423 [167]

48. The following transactions affecting land are permitted by local custom:— Alienation of lands. 425

Sale—(*saye*) in special circumstances
Loan—(*aro*)
Pledge—(*jingina*)

Gift or exchange do not appear to take place. Such transactions would be regarded locally as loans. Share cropping is unknown. So also is renting or leasing. Such transactions would not be acknowledged as being in conformance with tribal custom. Their introduction would be strongly opposed by responsible elements.

49. In pre-British times the outright sale of land was permitted, but *only in one particular circumstance*. An essential preliminary to marriage was a gift of a goat by the suitor to the girl's relatives. It was an infallible rule—no goat, no girl. Consequently if a man had no goat he was allowed, after consultation with and with the consent of his own relatives, to sell a field to get himself a goat. His own relatives would, of course, probably give him a goat if he had not one himself; but in the last resort and if he could obtain the goat by no other means, then he was allowed to sell a field to get the goat. The sale would be outright and neither he, his descendants nor his relatives nor their descendants could subsequently sustain a claim to the land. Any such sale would have to be reported to the head of the community and could not take place without his knowledge. It would have to be with the consent of his relatives and, above all, could take place in no other circumstance than that of obtaining the bride price—a goat for the prospective wife. Sale. 425 585

50. When the British came, however, (so local report has it) they prohibited the sale of farms—even in these special circumstances. Sales do not now take place. Indeed, according to the Elders, even if allowed by the British it is doubtful whether local opinion would agree to the revival of the custom. After all, in those days lands were more than ample. Nowadays it is very different. And anyway nowadays if a man was hard up and wanted money either for a wife, tax or any other reason all he had to do was to become a labourer for a while and he could get the money. There 425 177

425 was no need for him to deprive himself or his descendants of the land he had inherited.

51. There would seem to be some link between this detail of the Jaba custom and the " pledge " of the Kagoro referred to in paragraph 27. It may be that the former borrowed the idea, but perverted its practice. The divergence, however, seems to be beyond dispute. This custom is not acknowledged by the Kachia Jaba.

● [177]

Pledge.

426 52. The normal form of pledge is practised, *i.e.*, in return for a specific sum of money A will hand over to B his farm. The transaction is terminated either by the borrower of the money returning the money and the lender giving back the farm or the lender claiming his money back and then giving up the farm. It is resorted to when the farmer is hard pressed to pay cash, *e.g.*, for tax or an expensive wife. The farm will be pledged for a sum of money so that immediate payment can be made, after which the farmer will go away to become a labourer and having accumulated sufficient money to repay the debt will then claim back his farm. This is somewhat different to the Kagoro ' pledge '. In the latter case the goat is the pledge for the farm. With the Jaba the farm is the pledge for a sum of money.

Loan.

53. This transaction is similar to that practised by the Kagoro. There is no payment either in money or kind. In this case, however, instead of the handing over of the token chicken there is an annual brewing of beer made from the crop reaped by the borrower of the farm and shared with the lender. This, however, is only expected when a good crop has been reaped. The arrangement is terminable at either party's wish. The borrower is expected to hand back the farm in as good condition as he receives it. It is a year to year transaction and a lender will not lend the same farm continuously to another for a sufficient number of years to allow his title to be compromised. The building of a house has the same implications as with the Kagoro except that on vacating the land the borrower would not be entitled to the further year's grace period.

423 426 54. It is paradoxical that so much loaning of land should take place when there is no superabundance of land. Three reasons are given for this:—

(i) if a farm were left uncultivated for about twenty-five years and some one else started to farm it the original holder and his descendants would be considered to have lost their title and could not sustain a claim. (This deviates from the Kagoro custom). If, therefore, a man had more land than he could conveniently use himself he would see to it that he had a succession of ' borrowers ' on it to keep it all under cultivation. He